

Title: What's in Your Will?
Date: April 22, 2018
Subject: Encouragement to face life
Scripture: 2 Timothy 1

There were about 4 minutes a week ago Thursday just after 4:30 that I had no blood pressure. Zero. Nothing. The chiropractor assistant gave up. She figured the first blood pressure cuff needed new batteries and the second, which she used 3 times and went to error mode and 0 pressure each time, was worthless.

Now that I have your attention, let's talk about preparing for death. Specifically wills. Anthony Scott wrote in his: "To my first wife Sue, whom I always promised to mention in my will. Hello Sue!" A little bitter? German poet Heinrich "Henry" Heine left his estate to his wife Matilda on the condition that she remarry so that "there will be at least one man to regret my death." Whoa. Both were topped by Wellington Burt whose will was described as a "legacy of bitterness." He stipulated his massive wealth not be passed on until 21 years after the death of his last surviving grandchild. He died in 1919. The last grandchild in 1989. 21 years later in November 2010 a dozen people became beneficiaries of about \$10 million each.

On the brighter side, Portuguese aristocrat Luis Carlos de Noronha Cabral da Camara specified in his will that his fortune would go to 70 strangers randomly chosen out of a Lisbon phone directory. And Charles Vance Miller's will bequeathed a large sum to the Toronto woman who would produce the most offspring in the decade following his death in 1926. The "Great Stork Derby" produced four winners who tied with nine children. Each woman received the equivalent of over 2.2 million in today's dollars.

The apostle Paul wrote his "last will and testament" about what he'd leave behind and how his wishes could be carried out. It came during his second and final imprisonment in Rome. Conditions were far different from the earlier house arrest. Then he was a quasi-celebrity prisoner. Co-workers and friends could easily come and go. This time he was in a cold dank cell with extremely limited access to anyone from the outside world. The state of affairs in the Roman Empire had dramatically and drastically changed. Much of the discredit goes to Nero who became Emperor at age 17 and ruled for 14 years till his death. When a devastating fire raged through Rome, rumors circulated that he set the fire to clear land for an expanded palace and that he played his fiddle as the city burned. Whether those stories were true or not, he tried to ingratiate himself with the citizens through relief and humanitarian efforts. When those failed he sought sources on which to lay the blame. Ultimately, it came down to the Christians. This, coupled with their refusal to worship the Emperor as God like good Roman citizens, unleashed unprecedented persecution. Paul was one of those arrested under Nero's

regime. The apostle was the icing on the cake since he could be considered to be the ringleader. Paul knew he'd be martyred within a couple of years. It's from this situation that he wrote his last book – 2 Timothy.

2 Timothy is one of three Pastoral Epistles – 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and Titus -- so named since they were written to pastors – Timothy and Titus. This doesn't mean they only have insights for pastors. As Paul wrote in 2 Timothy, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (3:16).

Though Paul is certain his death is coming soon, he writes with hope. The first verse refers to the promise of life that is found in Christ Jesus. In 1 Corinthians he said that if Christ wasn't risen from the dead, those who claim to be his followers are the biggest fools, but Christ has been raised from the dead and therefore we are the ones with hope.

We're going to skip past Paul's usual invocation of grace, mercy and peace as well as the personal remembrances, which we sometimes refer to on Mothers' Day. Get to those sections that more directly speak to our moment in history that is becoming increasingly hostile to biblical Christianity. I use that term to differentiate people who are true followers of Jesus Christ from those who call themselves Christians but show little if any interest in the things of God or evidence of conversion. They essentially use the word "Christian" to say they aren't Jewish or Muslim, etc.

READ 2 Timothy 1:6, 7.

The first of three encouragements is to have passion/zeal.

I. Be a flame fanner 6, 7

What is *the gift*? The top two contenders are that it refers to salvation or Timothy's ministry. Both work in the setting. Timothy was a trusted co-worker of Paul. He participated in sharing the good news of Jesus Christ to those who hadn't yet come to faith in the Savior. He helped build established groups of believers.

As for gift being salvation – Timothy's heritage of faith is the immediate precursor to the call to fan into flame the gift. Salvation has an initial component – were saved. It has a continuous outworking – are being saved and will end in ultimate and complete salvation in heaven.

What us meant by *fan into flame*? It doesn't mean that the flame was about to go out. It wasn't that Timothy was neglecting something. It isn't a re-start or blowing on embers that only have a few faint orange spots. Rather it's the encouragement to keep the fire white hot. Keep pouring on the coal. It isn't a matter of correction but preventive action to keep the fire from fading.

The motivation is the work of God. He has provided resources for us. Because of him we don't have to be timid in the face of compounding hostility toward Christ and those who stand for him.

It's often thought hostility toward biblical Christianity occurs in countries dominated by Islam or communism. Not the case. Bolivia enacted a law in 2017 that would prohibit evangelism. It linked religious groups to terrorist organizations when it prohibited recruiting people "to take part in armed conflicts or religious or worship organizations." The Bolivian President said the code would be repealed. (Decision, March 2018, p. 3). Canada provides grants for summer jobs for students and youth service initiatives that are open only to those with views that are "consistent with individual human rights in Canada...this includes sexual and reproductive rights—and the right to access safe and legal abortions." (Decision, March 2018, p. 3, 4).

In America, Coach Joe Kennedy was fired as football coach of a Washington high school football team for praying after the game by himself (Decision, March 2018, p. 5). A Christian student group was expelled from the University of Iowa because of its Biblical beliefs about marriage being between one man and one woman. It didn't measure up to the school's human rights policy. Thankfully, a court ruled that the group should be reinstated. (Decision, March 2018, p. 5).

Instead of retreating into holes in the ground, followers of Christ are to take a stand as we've been given a spirit of power. The Lord demonstrated his power when he saved us. He continues to work out his power, described as "aggressive energy in the face of difficulty, which overcomes the weakness of cowardice and enables one to work, to endure, to suffer, and to die if need be" (Second Timothy, D. Edmond Hiebert, p. 36). We might not like that last part. Power is the ability to fight the good fight of the faith, to resist temptation.

We've also been given the spirit of love. This modifies how power is exerted. Without love power might be wielded as a hammer or a sword. Love is at the heart of the Lord. He gives his love to his followers. It is "that self-forgetting love to Christ, the church, and the souls of men, which exhorts, warns, rebukes with boldness and fidelity" (ibid).

We've also been given the spirit of self-discipline or self-control. It's thinking and behavior that's aligned with God's will not the world's view, governed by what is moral rather than the immoral.

II. Be courageous 8 – 12

The idea of being ashamed is brought up 4 times including the one in v. 16. Ashamed is the opposite of courage. It's withdrawing, retreating out of embarrassment to be associated with Christ. Paul wasn't ashamed to be in prison. Being in prison could bring shame in itself. It wasn't like there was some game show "Who wants to be a Prisoner?" with lovely gifts just for playing. Prison was for bad people and the conditions were bad. However, he had done nothing bad. He knew he was suffering in prison because he dared to talk about Jesus. His enemies would be quick to point that out. "Hey Paul, what are you doing in here? I thought you were an apostle and teacher. Why isn't your Jesus doing something about it if he is so all good and wonderful?"

It didn't matter to Paul. He was not ashamed of knowing Christ, of following Christ, of telling about Christ or suffering for Christ. It was him who said, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16). Paul knew there was nothing he or anyone could do to bring about their salvation. He was absolutely amazed at God's glorious grace.

Therefore he was willing to suffer and ask others to not be ashamed to talk about the Lord and not be ashamed of him, even being willing to suffer for Jesus. The underlying reason is the power of God is displayed through the gospel. It brings the life-giving force of salvation from God. Jesus came to earth, lived, died, was buried and rose from the dead. He destroyed death, making it completely ineffective in harming the real person. Death was transformed into a door through which Christ's followers walk into the presence of God. Death was replaced with immortality. The Gospel sheds light on the way to life and immortality as being only through Jesus Christ. God had to stop us in our tracks to get our attention as we were wandering away from him. For Paul, it meant being knocked off a horse. For me it included a realization of the awfulness of hell. For you it may have been a painful situation, a tragedy or coming to grips with personal weakness.

The last phrase of v. 12 looks ahead to the Day of Judgment. "He is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day." There is coming a Great White Throne Judgment when believers will be separated from unbelievers with the latter consigned to hell for eternal torment because they didn't place their trust in Christ. Believers face a subsequent judgment, that of being rewarded for their efforts in building God's kingdom. God has saved us and called us to live a holy life. Paul is confident that what he placed in God's hands – his faith in Christ and how he lived his life for Christ -- will be secure.

A family put their elderly grandmother on a plane for her first flight. She wasn't too sure about this mode of transportation but she grudgingly went along with it. When she returned, some of the family members couldn't help playfully ask, "Grannie, did the plane hold you up okay?" She reluctantly admitted that it did, but then added, "But I never put my full weight down on it."

Paul put his weight fully on Christ. We need to do the same.

III. Be faithful to the mission 13-18

The theme of guarding carries over. Previously, it was the Lord who guarded. Now it's Christ followers who are to actively guard the gospel. It's a baton that's been passed on from one to another. As each receives the message they are responsible for faithfully protecting it and passing it on to the next one. This isn't accomplished by our human capacity. It's through dependence on the divine resident – the Holy Spirit. He is the one who teaches and brings the words of Jesus to remembrance. Guarding is accomplished by keeping the pattern of sound teaching and relaying the truth to the next person and generation. The people during the time

of Joshua followed after the Lord as long as he and his contemporaries were alive. Something happened, or I should say didn't happen, as the next generation walked away from the Lord. Maybe they weren't taught or shown models of what it meant to follow the Lord or the generation was only interested on the surface and attracted to worldly pursuits.

There are general principles of biblical interpretation. The simplest way to put it is with three questions: What does it say? What does it mean? How do I apply it? These are clarified as we pray and express our dependence on the Holy Spirit to illuminate. We look at the context, try to obtain the meaning to the original readers, take the literal meaning unless there is good reason to do otherwise, understand the type of genre, historical background, grammar, compare with other Scriptures, define words.

Scripture didn't come about by one person's interpretation (2 Peter 1:20). Likewise an understanding of it won't come through one person's unique spin.

Paul illustrates the need for faithfulness by declaring that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted him. They didn't keep the pattern of sound teaching. They didn't guard the truth. Instead they separated from it. They were ashamed of him and weren't willing to suffer along with him.

There was one man who stuck his neck out to associate with Paul. Onesiphorus. He was from Ephesus and either was in Rome on business or specifically came there to find Paul. It was a risky task. Being a Christian could mean being thrown to the lions or wrapped in oil soaked cloths and burned as a torch for Nero's garden parties. O found Paul. He refreshed Paul. It had to be good for the old apostle to see a familiar face and more importantly the face of a fellow believer who acted as the hands and feet of Jesus.

I'm sure that Rachael Denhollander had feelings that it might just be better to say nothing, hoping it would all go away. But she didn't give in to fear. She exerted power, love and self-discipline as she unashamedly testified about the Lord. She did so in a difficult place. Rachael was the first to publicly accuse Dr. Larry Nassar, former doctor of the USA Gymnastics Team, of sexual abuse. She was the last of 150 victims to give an impact statement to the court at Nassar's sentencing. Her message went viral on social media. Rachel boldly presented the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ, as she shared her story and asked for justice.

Here's part of what she said: "I pray you experience the soul-crushing weight of guilt so you may someday experience true repentance and true forgiveness from God, which you need far more than forgiveness from me—though I extend that to you as well. Should you ever reach the point of truly facing what you have done, the guilt will be crushing. And that is what makes the Gospel of Christ so sweet. Because it extends grace and hope and mercy where none should be found. And it will be there for you."

Passion, courage and faithfulness to Christ's mission. Could say that's God will for us.